

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



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2016 Yukon River Summer Salmon Fishery News Release # 63

Summer Update # 9, Yukon Area Salmon Fishery

Districts Affected: Yukon Area

Summer Assessment

As of July 17, the cumulative Chinook salmon passage at the sonar project near Pilot Station was approximately 175,000 fish, which is the upper end of the preseason outlook but below the historical early year average of about 214,000 fish for this date. Based on historical run timing, Chinook salmon passage is estimated to be 99% complete at the sonar project near Pilot Station as of July 17. Preliminary run timing dates suggest the 2016 Chinook salmon run was up to four days earlier than the historical average run timing.

As of July 17, approximately 33,000 Chinook salmon have been counted at the sonar project near Eagle, which is above the historical average of approximately 14,000 fish. The first two pulses of Chinook salmon have been counted at the sonar and the third and fourth pulses of Chinook salmon should reach the sonar by July 20 and July 26, respectively. As a result of considerable conservation efforts, the 2016 Chinook salmon run is expected to meet the border escapement goal, despite being below average in run size.

The Chinook salmon escapement goal at the East Fork Andreafsky River has been met and the cumulative Chinook salmon passage estimate at the Henshaw Creek weir is above average for this date. The cumulative Chinook salmon passage estimate at the Gisasa Creek weir is slightly below average for this date. Unfortunately, high water conditions have hindered operations at the escapement monitoring projects on the Salcha and Chena rivers. Sonar counts have continued on the Chena and Salcha rivers during high water conditions but apportioned counts of Chinook and summer chum salmon will not be available until post-season data analysis is concluded.

As of July 17, the cumulative summer chum salmon passage at the sonar project near Pilot Station is approximately 1,900,000 fish, which is above the historical cumulative median of 1,700,000 fish for this date. Starting July 18, the summer chum salmon run will be considered complete at the sonar project and chum salmon estimates after that date will be assumed to be fall chum salmon. The escapement goal of at least 40,000 summer chum salmon at the East Fork Andreafsky River weir was achieved on July 10. Summer chum salmon passage estimates at the Gisasa and Henshaw creek weirs are well above average for this date; however, summer chum passage at the Anvik sonar project is below average for this date.

Summer Assessment Projects

Sonar Project near Pilot Station / ADF&G

The sonar project near Pilot Station has been fully operational since June 1, which is one of the earliest start dates since 1995. Chinook salmon passage as of July 17 is estimated to be 175,196 fish which is below the historical cumulative early year average of 214,339 fish. Summer chum salmon passage as of July 17 is estimated to be 1,917,922 fish which is well above the historical cumulative median of 1,654,046 summer chum salmon for this date.

East Fork Andreafsky River Weir / USFWS

The East Fork Andreafsky River weir began operations on June 20. Chinook salmon passage as of July 17 is estimated to be 2,582 fish, which is below the historical cumulative average of 3,380 Chinook salmon for this date. Summer chum salmon passage as of July 17 is estimated to be 48,165, which is above the historical cumulative median of 43,017 for this date. The Sustainable Escapement Goal (SEG) for the Andreafsky River is 2,100–4,900 for Chinook salmon and greater than 40,000 for summer chum salmon; both of these escapement goals have been met.

Anvik River Sonar / ADF&G

The Anvik River sonar began operations on June 16. Summer chum salmon passage as of July 17 is estimated to be 299,250 fish, which is below the historical cumulative median of 390,269 fish for this date. The Biological Escapement Goal (BEG) for summer chum salmon is 350,000–700,000 fish past the sonar project.

Gisasa River Weir / USFWS

The Gisasa River weir began operations on June 17, which is one of the earliest start dates since 1995. Chinook salmon passage as of July 17 is estimated to be 1,147 fish, which is below the historical cumulative average of 1,406 Chinook salmon for this date. Summer chum salmon passage as of July 17 is estimated to be 47,233 fish, which is well above the historical median of 28,679 summer chum salmon for this date.

Henshaw Creek Weir / TCC

The Henshaw Creek Weir began operations on June 26. Chinook salmon passage as of July 17 is estimated to be 1,076 fish, which is above the historical cumulative average of 983 Chinook salmon for this date. Summer chum salmon passage as of July 17 is estimated to be 206,081 fish, which is well above the historical median of 38,050 summer chum salmon for this date.

Chena River Tower / ADF&G

The Chena River tower began operations on June 26. Poor water conditions have been obscuring visibility at the tower since June 28; however, sonar is also in operation and will be used post-season to assess passage during days when visibility prohibited counts from the tower. Prior to June 28, three Chinook and zero summer chum salmon were counted at the tower. The BEG for Chinook salmon is 2,800–5,700 fish past the tower.

Salcha River Tower / ADF&G

The Salcha River tower began operations on June 26. As of July 17, 1,534 Chinook and 621 summer chum salmon have been counted at the tower. However, these are incomplete counts because poor water conditions obscured visibility at the tower between July 4 and July 10. Sonar was in operation during that time and will be used post-season to assess passage during days when visibility prohibited counts from the tower. The BEG for Chinook salmon is 3,300–6,500 fish past the tower.

Eagle Sonar / ADF&G

The Eagle sonar project began operations on July 1, which is one of the earliest start dates since the project began in 2005 and the run timing appears to be early; similar to passage in the lower river. Approximately 32,938 Chinook salmon have been counted at the sonar project as of July 17, which is above the historical cumulative average of 13,798 for this date.

Age Composition

The Chinook salmon age composition from drift gillnets in the Pilot Station test fishery from May 30 through July 6 was 14% age-4, 68% age-5, 16% age-6, and 1% age-7 fish. The sample size was 650 fish, of which 44% were female. As expected from the preseason forecast based on brood returns, the proportion of age-4 and age-5 fish was above average, while the proportion of age-6 fish was below average.

The Chinook salmon age composition from the 8.5-inch LYTF set nets from through June 30 was less than 1% age-3, 8% age-4, 55% age-5, 35% age-6, and 2% age-7 fish. The sample size was 902 fish, of which 47% were female. Similar to the Pilot Station test fishery, the proportion of age-4 and age-5 fish was above average, while the proportion of age-6 fish was below average.

The chum salmon age composition from the 5.5-inch LYTF drift nets through June 29 was less than 1% age-3, 58% age-4, 38% age-5, and 3% age-6 fish. The sample size was 647 fish, of which 59% were female.

The chum salmon age composition from the beach seine and dip net commercial fishery in District 1 (June 14–June 25) was 59% age-4, 38% age-5, and 4% age-6 fish. The sample size was 718 fish, of which 37% were female.

The chum salmon age composition from the restricted gillnet commercial period on June 28 in District 1 was 1% age-3, 53% age-4, 42% age-5, and 4% age-6 fish. The sample size was 80 fish, of which 47% were female.

Stock Identification

Genetic mixed stock analysis (MSA) on the early group and first pulse of Chinook salmon past the sonar project near Pilot Station (May 30 to June 14) estimated 52% of the fish were of Canadian-origin, which is slightly above expectations for even-year Chinook salmon runs. Genetic MSA indicated that roughly 34% of the second and third pulses of Chinook salmon past the sonar project (June 15 to June 25) were of Canadian-origin, which was slightly below expectations for even-year Chinook salmon runs. Finally, Genetic MSA indicated that about 54% of the Chinook salmon that were sampled at the sonar project between June 26 and July 6 were of Canadian-origin, which is above average for this component of the Chinook salmon run.

Three strata of chum salmon genetic samples have been processed in 2016. The strata from May 30–June 21 consisted of 99% summer chum salmon, of which about 9% were bound for the middle Yukon River and about 1% were bound for the Tanana River. The strata from June 22–June 28 also indicated that summer chum salmon made up approximately 99% of the sample but consisted of about 23% middle Yukon River stocks and about 2% Tanana River stocks. The strata from June 29–July 9 indicated that summer chum salmon made up approximately 97% of the sample and consisted of about 32% middle Yukon River stocks and about 9% Tanana River stocks.

Summer Season Management Strategies

The majority of the Chinook salmon run has migrated out of the lower and middle Yukon River. Therefore, subsistence salmon fishing schedules up through Subdistrict 5-C have been relaxed. Subsistence salmon fishing gear is restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets to target summer chum salmon still moving through the districts, while minimizing the harvest of larger, female Chinook salmon. Subsistence fishermen in Districts 2 through Subdistrict 5-C have also been provided one short 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnet subsistence period to allow a limited harvest opportunity for Chinook salmon.

Due to the uncertainty associated with the Canadian-origin Chinook salmon run assessment to date, conservative management actions are still being implemented in Subdistrict 5-D. As of July 18, the first and second pulses of Chinook salmon have been counted at the Eagle sonar project. Although promising, these Eagle sonar counts reflect pulses of Chinook salmon that were protected from subsistence harvest. Given that the third and fourth pulses of Chinook salmon have experienced subsistence fishing pressure along the river, the department would like to see initial passage estimates for these groups of Chinook salmon before relaxing restrictions in Subdistrict 5-D. However, in order to provide some limited harvest opportunity for Chinook salmon, the department has provided a 12-hour, 24-hour, and 3.5-day subsistence fishing periods in Subdistrict 5-D. Gear is limited to 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets during these openings to allow large, female Chinook salmon to continue their upriver migration to spawning grounds in Canada.

Based on sonar passage estimates and commercial harvest, the 2016 summer chum salmon run has exceeded 2 million fish; therefore, liberal summer chum salmon subsistence fishing with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets has been provided from the Coastal District up through Subdistrict 4-C.

Fall Season Assessment

The 2016 fall chum salmon preseason run projection, based on the summer chum to fall chum salmon relationship, is for a run size between 800,000 and 900,000 fish. This level of abundance should be sufficient to provide for escapement, an above average subsistence harvest, and a surplus available for commercial and personal use purposes. A mixture of both summer chum and fall chum salmon are currently entering the Yukon River.

The coho salmon outlook is for an average to above average return. The primary parent year for coho salmon this year is from the escapements of 2012. Coho salmon will begin entering the Yukon River any day but the majority of the run arrives in August.

Fall Assessment Projects

Lower Yukon River Cooperative Fall Drift Test Fishing / ADF&G, YDFDA

The project began July 16 at Emmonak when the gear was switched from 5.5 inch mesh for summer chum salmon to 6 inch mesh targeting fall chum and coho salmon.

Mountain Village Drift Test Fishing / Asacarsarmiut Traditional Council

The fall season project began July 18 at Mountain Village data will be forth coming next week.

Sonar Project near Pilot Station / ADF&G

The sonar project near Pilot Station will transition to fall season counts on July 19.

Fall Season Management Strategies

The Coastal District, Districts 1, 2, and 3, and the Innoko River full regulatory schedules have been announced for the fall season. Subsistence fishermen may use gillnets with 7.5 inch mesh or smaller in these areas. The remaining upriver districts and subdistricts will transition to fall season management as the fall chum salmon migration enters those areas.

General Management Reminders:

- Fishermen are asked to please record their subsistence harvests, including any salmon kept from commercial fishing, on their harvest calendars for all species of fish.
- During subsistence salmon fishing closures in the Yukon Area, gillnets 4-inch or smaller mesh of 60 feet or shorter length may be used for non-salmon species. All salmon caught in 4-inch gillnets may be kept but fishermen may not target salmon as this gear is intended for non-salmon species. Fish wheels may not be operated during subsistence salmon closures.
- Chinook salmon caught in gillnets may be kept for subsistence use.

Current Management

Coastal District (from the Naskonat Peninsula north to Point Romanof and including all state marine waters):

Subsistence salmon fishing is currently open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets.

District 1 (including the Black River):

Subsistence salmon fishing is currently open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets except for 12 hours before, during, and 12 hours after commercial fishing periods.

District 2:

Subsistence salmon fishing is currently open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets except for six hours before, during, and six hours after commercial fishing periods.

Effective 12:01 a.m. Tuesday, July 19, subsistence salmon fishing will be open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets except for 12 hours before, during, and 12 hours after commercial fishing periods.

District 3:

Currently, subsistence salmon fishing is open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets.

Effective 12:01 a.m. Wednesday, July 20, subsistence salmon fishing will be open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets.

Innoko River:

Subsistence salmon fishing is currently open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets.

Subdistrict 4-A (from $\frac{3}{4}$ mile downstream of Old Paradise Village upstream to Cone Point, which includes the mainstem Yukon River communities of Anvik, Grayling, Kaltag, Nulato, and Koyukuk):

Subsistence salmon fishing is currently open five days per week with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels on the following schedule:

- 6:00 p.m. Tuesdays until 6:00 p.m. Sundays

Fishermen may use set or drift gillnets. Drift gillnets may not exceed 25 fathoms in length.

Subdistrict 4-B and 4-C (from Cone Point to Illinois Creek, which includes the mainstem Yukon River communities of Galena and Ruby):

Subsistence salmon fishing is open five days per week with 6-inch or smaller mesh set gillnets and fish wheels on the following schedule:

- 6:00 p.m. Sundays until 6:00 p.m. Fridays

Fishing with drift gillnets in the Federal public waters closed by regulation at midnight on July 14. Therefore, only set gillnets may be used in Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C.

Koyukuk River:

Subsistence fishing is currently open 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets.

Subdistricts 5-A, 5-B, and 5-C (from the western edge of the mouth of Illinois Creek upstream to the ADF&G regulatory marker located approximately two miles downstream of Waldron Creek, including the communities of Tanana and Rampart as well as the area near the Yukon River bridge):

Currently, subsistence salmon fishing is open for two 24-hour periods per week with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets (set net only) and fish wheels on the following schedule:

- 6:00 p.m. Tuesdays until 6:00 p.m. Wednesdays
- 6:00 p.m. Fridays until 6:00 p.m. Saturdays

Effective 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, July 19, subsistence salmon fishing will open for two 48-hour periods per week with 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets (set net only) and fish wheels on the following schedule:

- 6:00 p.m. Tuesdays until 6:00 p.m. Thursdays
- 6:00 p.m. Fridays until 6:00 p.m. Sundays

All salmon caught in set gillnets and fish wheels may be kept for subsistence use.

A fishing permit is required to fish for all species in the portion of Subdistrict 5-C from the western most tip of Garnet Island upstream to the mouth of Dall River.

Subdistrict 5-D Lower (from an ADF&G regulatory marker two miles downstream of Waldron Creek upstream to the Hadweenzic River and including all adjacent tributaries, which includes the communities of Stevens Village and Beaver):

Subsistence fishing in Subdistrict 5-D Lower is currently in progress.

- Effective at 7:00 p.m. Sunday, July 17, subsistence salmon fishing will open for one 24-hour period with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh and fish wheels from 7:00 p.m. Sunday, July 17, until 7:00 p.m. Monday, July 18.
- Effective 7:00 p.m. Wednesday, July 20, subsistence salmon fishing will open for one 3.5-day period with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh and fish wheels from 7:00 p.m. Wednesday, July 20, until 7:00 a.m. Sunday, July 24.

Chinook salmon caught in 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels may be kept for subsistence purposes.

Subdistrict 5-D Middle (from the Hadweenzic River upstream to 22 Mile Slough and including the Porcupine River and all other adjacent tributaries, which includes the communities of Venetie, Chalkyitsik and Fort Yukon):

Subsistence fishing in Subdistrict 5-D Middle is currently in progress.

- Effective at 7:00 p.m. Sunday, July 17, subsistence salmon fishing will open for one 24-hour period with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh and fish wheels from 7:00 p.m. Sunday, July 17, until 7:00 p.m. Monday, July 18.
- Effective 7:00 p.m. Wednesday, July 20, subsistence salmon fishing will open for one 3.5-day period with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh and fish wheels from 7:00 p.m. Wednesday, July 20, until 7:00 a.m. Sunday, July 24.

Chinook salmon caught in 6-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets and fish wheels may be kept for subsistence purposes.

Subdistrict 5-D Upper (from 22 Mile Slough to the U.S./Canada border and including all adjacent tributaries, which includes the communities of Circle and Eagle):

Subsistence fishing in Subdistrict 5-D Upper is currently closed.

- Effective 7:00 p.m. Wednesday, July 20, subsistence salmon fishing will open for one 3.5-day period with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh and fish wheels from 7:00 p.m. Wednesday, July 20, until 7:00 a.m. Sunday, July 24.

Chinook salmon caught in 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels may be kept for subsistence purposes.

A fishing permit is required to fish for all species in the following locations: between the western tip of Garnet Island and the Dall River (Dalton Highway bridge area) and from the upstream mouth of 22 Mile Slough to the U.S./Canada border.

Subdistricts 6-A and 6-B (from the mouth of the Tanana River upstream to the regulatory marker at the mouth of Wood River, which includes the communities of Manley, Minto, and Nenana):

Subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistricts 6-A and 6-B is open for two 42-hour periods each week, from 6:00 p.m. Mondays until 12:00 p.m. noon Wednesdays and from 6:00 p.m. Fridays until 12:00 noon Sundays, with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels.

The Kantishna River is open on its regulatory subsistence salmon fishing schedule of 24 hours a day, seven days per week with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels.

The Old Minto area is open on its regulatory schedule of five days per week from 6:00 p.m. Fridays until 6:00 p.m. Wednesdays with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels.

Subsistence fishermen are reminded that a subsistence fishing permit is required to fish for salmon in the Tanana River drainage. Permits are available from the ADF&G office in Fairbanks. Subsistence fishermen fishing in the upper portion of Subdistrict 6-B, from three miles upstream of the mouth of Totchaket Slough to Wood River, are required to report their harvest catches to the department by **4:30 PM Thursday** each week by contacting the department at **(907) 459-7388**. When you call, please provide your name, permit number, fishing location, and daily catch by species for that week.

Upper Tanana Area (the Tanana River from the confluence with the mouth of Volkmar River on the north bank and the mouth of the Johnson River on the south bank upstream to the Tanana River headwaters, including the communities of Healy Lake, Dot Lake, Tanacross, Northway, and the Tok area):

Subsistence fishing is open 24 hours a day, seven days per week. Fishermen may use fish wheels or gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less.

Subdistricts 6-C (from the regulatory marker at the mouth of the Wood River upstream to the downstream mouth of the Salcha River, which includes the communities of Fairbanks, North Pole, and Salcha):

Personal use salmon fishing is open for two 42-hour periods each week, from 6:00 p.m. Friday until 12:00 p.m. noon Sunday and from 6:00 p.m. Monday until 12:00 p.m. noon Wednesday. Fishermen may use 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels. Chinook salmon may be retained from gillnets and fish wheels.

Commercial Fishing:

The Lower Yukon summer chum salmon directed commercial fishery began on June 7 in District 1 and June 14 in District 2 with beach seine and dip net gear only. From June 26 to July 5 fishermen in District 1 used 5.5-inch gillnets limited to 30 meshes deep to harvest summer chum salmon while minimizing the incidental harvest of Chinook salmon. Starting July 6 in District 1, and June 27 in District 2, fishermen have used 6-inch or smaller mesh gillnets to target summer chum salmon. The preliminary commercial harvest in District 1 through July 17 is approximately 282,739 summer chum salmon with a reported 4,161 Chinook salmon released alive from dip nets and beach seines and 2,726 Chinook salmon kept for subsistence use. The preliminary commercial harvest in District 2 through July 17 is approximately 227,777 summer chum salmon with a reported 4,082 Chinook salmon released alive from dip nets and beach seines and 2,553 Chinook salmon kept for subsistence use. The preliminary commercial harvest in District 6 through July 17 is approximately 1,233 summer chum salmon with a reported 97 Chinook salmon kept for subsistence use.

District 6 Commercial Schedule:

Commercial fishing in District 6 is open for two 42-hour fishing periods per week on the following schedule with 7.5-inch or smaller mesh gillnets and fish wheels:

- 6:00 p.m. Mondays, until 12:00 p.m. noon Wednesdays
- 6:00 p.m. Fridays, until 12:00 p.m. noon Sundays

Commercial fishermen should coordinate with the buyer on a daily basis regarding scheduling deliveries. All salmon harvested during commercial fishing operations must be recorded on a fish ticket at the time of sale. All Chinook salmon kept for personal use from gillnets and fish wheels must also be recorded on the fish ticket. Other fish species caught but not sold must also be recorded on the fish ticket. Processors, catcher-sellers, or direct marketers should notify the department of their intent to operate by contacting the Fairbanks office at 459-7274.

Fall Season Commercial Salmon Fishing

The fall chum salmon commercial fishing season is open in District 1. District 2 should stand by for an announcement. It is expected that both districts will start the season on a fishing schedule of two periods per week with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh. The sale of incidentally caught Chinook salmon is prohibited.

District 1, including the Set Net Only Area

Period #1: 3:00 p.m. until 12:00 midnight Monday, July 18

All Chinook salmon caught in gillnets may be kept for subsistence use and must be recorded on a fish ticket as “kept but not sold”.

All Chinook salmon kept for subsistence use during the commercial gillnet opening must be marked by removing both tips of the tail fin. The tips must be removed before concealing the Chinook salmon from plain view or before transferring the salmon from the fishing site.

The subsistence fishing schedule and recorded fishery announcements will be available 24 hours a day at **(866) 479-7387** (toll free outside of Fairbanks); in Fairbanks, call **459-7387**.

If you have any questions regarding this report, please call the ADF&G office in Emmonak at (907) 949-1320, the ADF&G office in Fairbanks at (907) 459-7274 or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Fairbanks at (907) 455-1849.

This is an announcement by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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